DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/GIS/IPS
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BUDDHISTS. THE DLAT CONSITUENCY IS THE ONLY HIGHLAND AREA WHERE HUONG HAS A CHANCE OF BEATING THE MILITARY TICKET. THE DEGREE OF SUPPORT FOR THE SUU-DAN CANDIDACY IS HARD TO ESTIMATE, BUT IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT HE WILL RUN THIRD WITH SOMETHING LESS THAN 10 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. HA THUC KY AND TRUONG DINH DZU WILL PROBABLY DO BETTER THAN THE REMAINING CANDIDATES, BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT EITHER WILL RECEIVE EVEN 5 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

2. THE FACT THAT THE THIEU-KY TICKET IS THE ONLY PRESIDENTIAL SLATE WHICH HAS CONDUCTED AN ATIVE CAMPAIGN IN THE HIGHLAND

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IS ONE REASON WHY NONE OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES IS ABLE TO CHALLENGE ITS LEAD. THIEU-KY HAVE APPOINTED ONE VIETNAMESE (USUALLY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL) AND ONE MONTAGNARD USUALLY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTY) TO REPRESENT THEM IN EACH PROVINCE. GENERALLY THESE MEN ARE BETTER KNOWN AND AT LEAST AS ACTIVE AS THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES. DURING THE CAMPAIGN, THIEU HAS MADE FOUR APPEARANCES IN THE HIGHLANDS (QUANG DUC, LAM DONG, DALAT AND BAN ME THUOT). ALTHOUGH ALL OF THESE TRIPS WERE MADE ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS, THIEU EXPLOITED THE OPPORTUNITY EACH TIME. THE MOST NOTABLE OF THIEU'S TRIPS WAS HIS AUGUST 29 APPEARANCE NEAR BAN ME THUOT ATWHICH HE PROMULGATED A STATUT PARTICULIER AND A HIGHLANDS LAND LAW, TWO DOCUMENTS LNG SOUGHT BY THE MONTAGNARDS. NONE OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIATES HAS BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN THE HIGHLANDS. A HUONG SUPPORTER'S REMARK THAT HUONG HAS WRITTEN OFF THE HIGHLANDS SEEMS ACCURATE FOR NOT EVEN THOSE HUONG BACKERS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE HIGHLANDS VOTE SERIOUSLY TRIED TO DO SO. THE ONLY REGULAR PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY IN THE HIGHLANDS, THE AUGUST 21 PUBLIC MEETING IN BAN ME THUOT, WAS ATTENDED BY PHAN

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QUANG DAN AND HA THUC KY. NONE OF THE OTHER MAJOR CONTENDERS APPEARED.

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ACTION SS 70

INFO NSCE 00,CIAE 00,SSO 00,DODE 00,USIE 00,NSAE 00,CCO 00,/070 W

P R 3.0630Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5726
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4012
CINCPAC FOR POLAD
AMCONSUL DANANG 842
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2339

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LIMDIS

8. THE ONLY OTHER SIZEABLE GROUP IN THE ELECTORATE IS THE 55,000 BUDDHIST VOTERS, 90 PERCENT OF WHOM ARE CENTRAL VIETNAMESE BY ORIGIN. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE TWO SMALLEST PROVINCES (QUANG DUC AND PHU BON) WHERE THE MONKS FAVOR TAM CHAU, THE UNITED BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP IN THE HIGHLANDS WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS SIDES WITH THICH TRI QUANG. THESE TRI QUANG MONKS HAVENOT TAKEN PUBLIC POSITIONS ON THE ELECTION

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THUS FAR AND WE HAVE BEEN UNALBLE TO DETERMINE HOW THE BUDDHIST LEADERSHIP WILL INSTRUCT THE FAITHFUL. THE NORTHERN BUDDHISTS MINORITY FAVORS THIEU. THE BULK OF THE OTHERS SEEM TO SUPPORT HUONG, NU THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS OF CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FOR THE SUU-DAN CANDIDACY.

9. II CORPS COMMANDER VINH LOC HAS PUBLICLY ORDERED THAT THE MILITARY PLAY NO PARTISAN ROLE IN THE ELECTIONS. MANY PEOPLE POINT TO HIS AUTHORITARIAN CHARACTER, HIS ROOTS IN IM-

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'ERIAL HUE AND HIS POORLY VEILED INTERFERENCE IN LAST YEAR'S CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, AS REASONS WHY THESE PUBLIC STATEMENTS DO NOT REPRESENT THE WHOLE TRUTH. THE II CORPS HEADQUARTERS STAFF IN PLEIKU HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN ALL OF THIEU AND KY'S APPEARANCES IN II CORPS DURING THE PAST MONTH. VINH LOC'S PERSONAL SECRETARY, MAJ. NGUYEN HUU LUAN, TOLD AN EMBOFF HE CONSIDERS THESE VISITS PART OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. VINH LOC HAS BEEN THE PRIME MOVER BEHIND THE JUNE 25-26 MONTAGNARD CONGRESS IN PLEIKU AND THE AUGUST 29 CEREMONY IN BAN ME THUOT, WHICH HAVE BEEN PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT F-
ACTORS IN WINNING THE MONTAGNARD VOTE FOR THIEU.

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10. BY EVERY REPORT, THE 24TH SPECIAL ZONE AND 23RD DIVISION COMMANDERS AND SOME PROVINCE CHIEFS (PARTICULARLY COL. THANH IN DARLAC) ARE IN FACT COMPLETELY IMPARTIAL IN THE ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, THE MAJORITY OF THE PROVINCE CHIEFS HAVE STATED OR IMPLIED THAT THEY WOULD BE COUNSELING LOCAL LEADERS TO VOTE FOR THE MILITARY TICKET. ONE (COL. DOAN OF KONTUM) HAS SAID THAT HE COULD NOT ALLOW THE ELECTION OF A CIVILIAN CANDIDATE. WHILE THERE IS NO REASON TO EXPECT ANY BLATANT MANIPULATION OF THE RESULTS ON ELECTION DAY, THE CUM-ULATIVE EFFECT OF THEIR ACTIONS WILL BENEFIT THE MILITARY TICKET.

11. VOTERS IN THE HIGHLANDS (BOTH VIETNAMESE AND MONTAGNARDS) ARE AWARE THAT ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER THIRD. HOWEVER, THE CAMPAIGNING HAS GENERALLY BEEN LIMITED, POORLY ORGANIZED BY THE LOCAL COMMITTEES AND UNIMAGINATIVE. THE LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES ARE MOSTLY NOVICES AT WESTERN STYLE ELEC-TIONEERING AND HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO IMPROVISE CAMPAIGN TECH-NIQUES WHICH WOULD AROUSE VOTER INTEREST OR ATTRACT VOTES TO THEIR CANDIDATES. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE ELECTORATE IS ENTHUSIASTIC OR EVEN VERY INTERESTED IN THE ELECTIONS.

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NEVERTHELESS, ONE CAN EXPECT THAT OVER 80 PERCENT OF THE

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REGISTERED VOTERS WILL GO TO THE POLLS ON ELECTION DAY, PRIMARILY BECUASE THEY KNOW IT IS THEIR CIVIC DUTY TO DO SO.
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